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Europe Likes Fulbright's Views

Reasons Based on Senator's Position As Chairman and Closeness to Johnson

Despite half-hearted partial denials by Secretary of State Rusk that there has been no change in America's foreign policies, particularly toward Cuba, most Europeans consider Senator Fulbright's recent major speech urging a "re-thinking" of America's world position to be a new yardstick of Washington policy.

This interpretation is based not only on the fact that the Arkansan is chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee but also because of his known closeness to President Johnson who regards him as America's most knowledgeable authority on foreign affairs.

Europeans like Senator Fulbright's ideas, which are shared from London to Paris, Bonn and Rome. In each of these capitals there has been for some time a feeling that American policies are emotional, or based on "myths" as the Senator politely put it.

The French have made this clear in the last few months when President de Gaulle suggested the neutralization of South Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos and when he decided to extend formal recognition to Communist China and approved commercial deals with Cuba, nominally blockaded by the United States. The other major European allies were more cautious in expressing their approval of Senator Fulbright lest they embarrass President Johnson.

Britain, which recognized Communist China 14 years ago and has commercial dealings with Fidel Castro, has commented favorably in editorials in newspapers of both major political parties.

Italy, which is anxious to recognize Communist China, has publicly stated that Peking must be recognized eventually. But the coalition government headed by Premier Aldo Moro is unlikely to do anything about it until it gets a nod from Washington. The Italians have been doing business with Castro for a long time but Castro has not paid for the purchases.

The Germans remain on the

fence. They also have been doing business with Communist China and Cuba on the quiet. The Germans regard Southeast Asia as exclusively "America's baby."

The French, however, do have an interest not only because they once were lord and master of Indo-China but also because they intend to project themselves on the world scene with as many irons in the fire as the United States. Contrary to what is felt in many American quarters, Gen. de Gaulle is anxious that America remain the great world power she has become since the outbreak of World War II. He feels that Senator Fulbright—who incidentally is not one of the favorites of the Elysee—is right when he maintains that the United States is not thinking out seriously its foreign policies particularly toward China and Indo-China.

American troubles in South Viet Nam, according to Gen. de Gaulle, stem from the disregard of the fact that the South Viet Namee themselves don't want to fight for "democracy." To them this word is meaningless. All they want is to cultivate their rice paddies in peace; not to fear for their lives every moment of the day and night; and not to be overly oppressed by tax collectors. These people, who have never known liberty in the Western and particularly the American sense, see little difference between the regimes of Gen. Khanh and that of Ho Chi Minh. And regardless of how many stirring speeches Secretary of Defense McNamara may make, his words are meaningless to them.

Thus Senator Fulbright's suggestion that we "re-think" our policies in South Viet Nam was received with glee in Paris since it essentially endorses Gen. de Gaulle's earlier views which caused a storm of indignation in official Washington.

No dramatic changes are expected by Western Europe until after the November elections designate the next President of the United States.

In Europe, more than in America, it is taken for granted that President Johnson will be given four more years by the electorate. All the reports of Western European observers in America indicate that no Republican can successfully challenge the incumbent. Should there be an unexpected upset, it is likely that a new President will "re-think" American commitments somewhat along the lines expressed by Senator Fulbright.

European statesmen are accustomed to dramatic somersaults in international affairs; to former enemies becoming allies and vice versa. Expediency has been the watchword of European leaders for many years. Hence, they look hopefully to America following the European diplomatic traditions and revamping our policies, despite some strong opposition by presidential hopefuls who believe that the Achilles' heel of the present administration is foreign affairs and who intend to exploit it during the campaign. America has made many retreats from principles in the last 12 years. Hence, the next administration is expected to continue on that path.